THE POLITICS OF OIL EXPLORATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE ISSUE OF BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT
This paper focuses on politics of oil exploration with regards to the challenges of sustainable development in Nigeria, the Bayelsa State Experience. Oil exploration and production in Nigeria, Bayelsa State by the Petroleum sector has greatly improved the nation's economy over the years. Nigeria joined oil producing nations on 3rd august 1956 when oil was first discovered in commercial quantities in the Oloibiri of Bayelsa State and today Nigeria ranked as the leading oil and gas producer in Africa and the 6th largest exporter in the world. The area is generally referred to one of the most important wetland and marine system in the world. But the activities of oil exploration and exploitation have affected the area and the people are facing poverty. The research employed qualitative approach and made use of secondary sources of data collection. The data collected was analysed descriptively. Major findings showed that oil exploration by the oil sectors have problems of implementing sustainable development policies, it is also revealed that the existing statutory laws and regulations for environmental protection appears to be grossly inadequate. The study recommended that sustainable development strategies should be revisited and implemented in the area, Nigeria local Content Development and Monitoring Act of 2010 should adhere to its rules.

Introduction

The activities of oil exploration commenced in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria early 1900s by a Germany entity called "Nigerian Bitumen Corporation and British colonial petroleum and they left at the beginning of the World War 1, thereafter; license was issued to D'Arcy Exploration company which began operation in 1938 within Nigeria. Oil exploration and production in Nigeria by the oil and gas sector had played a very dominant role in the nation's economy and in relation to foreign aids to African countries over the years. The discovery of the first commercial production of oil by shell

British petroleum (now Royal Dutch shell) in January 1956 at Oloibiri of Bayelsa State in Nigeria, then production began in 1958 and this brought signaled to the true beginning of a profound transformation of Nigeria political and economic landscape and since 1970s,oil has actually accounted for over 80% of the Nigerian government revenue and 95% percent of the country export earnings, this had resulted also to the decline of the agricultural sector in the country's economy. The end of the Biafran war coincided with the rise in the world oil price, and Nigeria was able to reap instance riches from its oil production.

Nigeria joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) was established in 1977 which oversees the upstream and downstream sectors. However, Nigeria ranked the leading oil and gas producer in Africa and 6th largest exporter in the world. The area where oil exploration and production is taking place consists of varieties of ecosystems of mangrove swamps, fresh water swamps, rain forest. The area is generally referring to one of the most important wetland and marine system in the world, but due to the activities of oil exploration and exploitation the area had been affected of sustainable development and the people in the area have been suffering from extreme poverty as a result of the destruction of their environment of which they depend for survival.

Bayelsa State which this paper is centered on was created on 1st October, 1996. The state is situated in the southern parts of Nigeria and the state capital is Yenagoa. The state population is 1.998,349. Bayelsa State has one of the longest coastlines and it is among the largest and gas oil producing states in Nigeria which the environment has been destroyed by oil companies, militants, oil thieves.

The ecosystem in Bayelsa State has been greatly damaged of six decades of oil exploration and production and despite the immense contribution to the growth and development of the country; the people in the areas are facing environmental devastation and suffering from sustainable development. That is, the Bayelsa State environment is not developed and a number of issues in the coastal and riverbank erosion, flooding, oil spillage, gas flaring, noise pollution, land degradation, soil fertility loss, and deforestations continuously occur through oil exploration activities.

As a result of these suffering in the area, restive youth attacked pipelines on a daily basis and get crude oil which they sold for survival. According to Reuters (2016), Western allies and local officials have told the current president of Nigeria to address poverty and oil pollution in the area of Niger Delta to stop unrest. Osinbajo (2016), while addressing the issue of neglect of the region stated:

> *"we are determined to put right the wrongs of the pasts, where the people of this land were treated unfairly and the environment unduly polluted and degraded".(p.8).*

Theoretical Perspective

The study adopted the Marxist political economy approach to examine the oil exploration activities and the challenges of sustainable development. This approach scientifically studies the society in its totality and takes into consideration of social relation, class conflict and the organic relationship between the sub-structure (economy) and the super structure (politics). Marxist approach posits that the economic structure of the society and the base is responsible for creating and transforming its social economic, political, legal, religion and moral structures which represent the super structure.

Marx and Engels (1848, p. 56) observed that political power is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. Ake (1981, p. 3) asserts that the theory is a method which gives primacy to material conditions, particularly economic factors, in the explanation of social life. He further explains that economic need is man's most fundamental need, and unless man is able to meet this need, he cannot exist in the first place. He argued that man must eat before he can do anything else such as worship, pursue culture or become an economist. He contends that it is by man's productivity that he is able to obtain the economic means which he needs to sustain life.

In his words Ake stipulated:

> *"Once we understand what the material assets and constraints of a society are, how the society produces goods to meet its material needs, how the goods are distributed and what*

> *type of social relations arise from the organisation of production, we have come a long way to understanding the culture of that society, its laws, its religious system, its political system and even its mode of thought". (p.65).*

Iwarimie (1991, p. 50) the Marxist political economy approach showed that the holistic, historical orientation which is used for the analysis of social formations and their contradicting relationships, mainly focuses on the economic laws which governed the production and distribution of material benefits among individuals and groups at different stages of development of societies .In essence, the political economy approach unravel the oil production and lack of development paradigm in Nigeria, which is attributed to the obnoxious laws that govern the oil industry and despite the existence of Nigeria Local Content Development and Monitoring Act of 2010, the marginalization, neglect of the oil producing states still exist. Thus, the class analysis framework of the approach best explains the endemic class struggle between the exploiters (federal government, oil multinationals) and the exploited regions of Nigeria through environmental pollution. Importantly, this theory helps to explain the objective condition of the oil producing region in relation with the Nigerian state and global oil corporations.

The theory exposes the role of the government, oil and gas sectors of sharing produce or natural stock of wealth without contributing to it. More so, despite the level of contribution to the national wealth of Nigeria through oil exploration and production in the oil region, it clearly shows that the peoples environment which they depend on farming, fishing for livelihood are destroyed which causes major conflict between the government, oil companies and the host communities. Therefore, the theory will help to correct and improve on the exploitative tendency of the multinationals towards the area. More also, it will have revealed the importance of the Local Content Act in tackling the overall activities and programmes of the oil companies in doing the needful within the host communities.

Conceptual Review

Oil Exploration:

According to the Canada Justice Laws Website (2016:1), oil exploration includes surveying, mapping, test drilling and geological, geophysical and geochemical examinations carried out in pursuit of oil or gas. For Pokopo (2011), oil exploration is the process through which oil is drilled and processed. This also involves the process by which usable petroleum is extracted and removed from the earth, exploration of oil has resulted in environmental degradation and lack of good soil. Anikpe (1996) exploitation which is both on land and offshore has strong implications not only harmful to the ecosystem but also the health of the people who rely on untreated water for domestic use in these areas.

Zabbey (2004) oil exploration by seismic companies involves surveying, clearing of seismic lines and massive dynamiting for geological excavations. The explosion of dynamite in aquatic environments leads to narcotic effects and mortality of fish and other faunal organisms. George (as cited in Akuodu, 2011, p. 18) recognizes the methods of oil exploration, namely; Analysis of existing geological and other information: seismic surveys; and exploration drilling: He mentioned that of particular destructive impact of the earth's make up is the use of seismic survey. This method involves the gathering of information through sound waves into the earth's crust to measure the depth of the rock layers and the use of dynamites and other explosives. The explosives are either discharge in the bowels of the earth through water bodies or dry land. In addition to its direct impact on the aquatic stocks in the area, the after effects or shocks are known to sometimes cover as much a radius of 10 kilometers (Bassey, 2001). The implication of this is that, the more oil is explored in the region using this method, the more the regions natural environment witness shocks and rifts in its crust.

Sustainable Development

According to Brundtland (2015), sustainable development is defined as development that

satisfies the necessities of the current without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy theirs. In other words, it is the rational management of human, natural and economic resources that aims to satisfy the essential needs of humanity in the very long term. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 gave birth to the first true notion of sustainable development, which was called 'eco development' in those days. The founding conference was held in an atmosphere of conflict between the ecology and the economy. For Skye (2015), sustainable development is an approach to development that takes the definite resources of the earth into consideration. This can mean a lot of different things to different people, but it must commonly refer to the use of renewable energy resources and sustainable mineral use along with many other things. The idea is to create a system that "sustainable" meaning one that can keep going indefinitely into the future. Anup (2014) posited that sustainable development is often an over-used word, but goes to the heart of tackling a number of inter-related global issues such as poverty, inequality, hunger and environmental degradation. The concept of sustainable development means the satisfaction of human needs and aspirations in the major objectives of development. The essential needs of vast numbers of people in developing countries for food, clothing, shelter, jobs are not being met, and beyond their basic needs. These people have legitimate aspirations for an improved quality of life. Sustainable development in essence requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life.

The Disastrous Effects of Oil Exploration and the Problem of Sustainable Development in Bayelsa State

According to Oku (2012) the exploitation of the environment has immensely disrupted the fragile and dynamic equilibrium of the natural environmental complex of Bayelsa State of the Niger Delta respectively. He supported his view that the metastable parameters of the ecoweb are altered several damages were done to the Bayelsa atmosphere, edaphic and floral diversities of the landscape.Mr. Napoleon Ofuruma, a former chairman of Ogbia Local Government Area who spoke on behalf of committees of the nation's first oil well, lamented that oil exploration in the area has brought environmental devastation and suffering to the people, with the drying up of the oil in the area, Ofuruma noted that the people have not been able to return to farming and fishing because the land and creeks are now polluted.

Alowei (2000) stated that, the economic tragedies of these local oil bearing communities in Bayelsa State of Niger Delta are heightened by the non-diversification of the rural economy which was predominated by oil, subsistence farming been destroyed by oil exploitation then the local people are also excluded from the oil business or the benefits of the oil business such as contracts awareness, employment, inadequate or no compensation .Okaba (2005) equally stipulated some social resultant effects of the oil evils to include the emergency of war lords and myriad of armed youth groups, pirates and cult fraternity encouraged by the divide and rules tactics of the oil companies and sustained by the need to gain local control and privilege from the oil companies.

Gidado (as cited in Akuodu, 2011. p.78), stated that multinational oil companies while carrying out the oil exploitation activities undermined development and real economic growth and cause socio-cultural disarticulation. The MNOCs have exploited the cheap labour, unequal agreements on resources and cheap raw materials to realize huge profits from developing countries. The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, NOSDPA (2014) has revealed that Bayelsa State, records about 40 spill cases in a month. The Director General, Dr. Peter Idabor, who disclosed this also said that findings indicate that the rate of oil spill in Bayelsa State is more devastating than that of the widely reported Ogoni land in Rivers state. Though Bayelsa is one of the most endowed states in the federation, it nonetheless faces one of the most environmental despoliation occasioned by oil exploration and exploitation activities. Travelling to the hinterland of the state through the maze of rivulets for a first time visitor not used to the disgusting stench from the polluted environment along the waterways, could make one to throw up. In some of the routes, yellowish or brownish oil slick could be seen floating.This painful reality forced the Bayelsa State governor, Seriake Dickson, to cry out loud about the ongoing despoliation of the environment. Sadly, the very existence of the people depends on the environment, which is being destroyed with impunity due to oil and gas activities, crude oil thieves and illegal refinery operators.



Source : *Oil Spillage in Diebu Water Report*



Source : *Oil spillage in Kolo Creek*



Source*: Oil spillage Report in Azuzuama*

Dickson, called for stringent environment laws. This is for the protection and preservation of the environment against crude oil pollution and other activities occasioned by oil exploration and exploitation activities in the Niger Delta. He described Bayelsa State as the most fragile and highly compromised area, where environmental pollution has devastated the ecosystem for several decades since the discovery of crude oil in 1956. The environment is left to fend for itself, the livelihood and in fact the lives of the people and the ecosystem are not attended to. In addition, the former Attorney – General and Commissioner for Justice in Bayelsa State, Mr. Kemasuode Wodu, warned oil companies in Nigeria to open offices in Yenagoa, the state capital of Bayelsa State or prepared for the consequences. He said the state has contributed immensely to the development of the country by virtue of the mineral resources tapped from the state by the companies based on licenses granted by the federal government of Nigeria. The Bayelsa State has very large deposits of crude oil and natural gas, among others. It is worthy of note that crude oil was first produced in commercial quantities in Nigeria at Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa State almost years ago.

The oil companies have their operational facilities dotted all over Bayelsa State from where they drill crude oil and gas. But quite regrettably none of these multinational offices is cited in Yenagoa, a Bayelsa State. Our environment is in a grave state of devastation and despoliation. The companies do not carry out appropriate remediation of the degraded environment and neither is adequate compensation paid for the damage occasioned by the frequent spillages. He also added that the state government is ever ready to provide land for these companies to erect their offices and residential premises and issue certificates of occupancy in respect thereof within record time and the governor of Bayelsa State will sign certificates of occupancy within three months of the application if the applicant complies with all the needed requirements.

Source: Parts of Bayelsa State Damage Assessment Reports from 2012-2020

Location	Environment	Affected areas	Nature of incidence
Biseni	Fresh water swamp forest	20	Oil spillage
Etiama/Nembe	Fresh water swamp forest	20	Oil spillage/fire outbreak
Etelebu	Fresh water swamp forest	30	Oil spillage
Peremabiri	Fresh water swamp forest	30	Oil spillage
Adebawa	Fresh water swamp forest	10	Oil spillage
Diebu	Fresh water swamp forest	20	Oil spillage
Tebidaba	And mangrove	30	Oil spillage
Nembe creek	Mangrove forest	10	Oil spillage
Azuzuama	Mangrove	50	Oil spillage
Eni pipeline	Forest	21	Attack
Ogada-Brass	Fresh water/mangrove swamp	10	Oil spillage
Jalingo	Waters/creeks	The entire Jalingo	Oil spillage
Kolo creek	Farmlands, vegetables	Kolo Creek	Oil spillage
Koluama	Waters/creeks	Koluama 1 & 2	Oil spillage

Source: Government Reports on oil spills

Government Efforts in Providing Sustainable Development to the People of Bayelsa State of Nigeria.

The alarming issue of oil exploration and exploitation which causes environmental pollution and poverty has drawn many national and international attentions. Kpun (2015) in support of Governor Dickson, said there should be an environment summit to discuss the mitigating effects of oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the region and express the commitment to collaborate with NOSDRA to speed up the passage of the amended Act of the Agency, which at present is under the national assembly.

However, with an attempt to solve the problem of sustainable development. The president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has cautioned oil firms in the Niger Delta region to carry out their operations in line with international best practices by avoiding acts that would adversely affect the environment. Be that as it may, previous governments with the strong feeling of providing sustainable development established the Niger Delta Development Commission to tackle the developmental needs of the nine states that are producing oil. In view of this, another federal ministry of Niger Delta affairs was created in other to provide effective, efficient development to the people who are projecting the Nigeria nation's economy. Former president Goodluck Jonathan who came from Bayelsa State of Nigeria signed the Nigeria Local Content Development and Monitoring Act of 2010 and sited its headquarters in Bayelsa State, this board overseas every oil and gas sectors and provide even development to the oil producing states. The federal government efforts in providing sustainable development in the region offers 13% derivation to the oil producing states, which Bayelsa State is among. This process also

led to the appointment of the former Minister of Petroleum Resources Mrs.Diezani Alison-Madueke.

Methodology

The study adopted purely on qualitative approach since the research targeted the process of gathering a thorough thoughtful of the problem and the grounds that provided such investigation. The method engaged in the collection of the data for this study was purely on secondary sources, which include textbooks, journals, internets, and additional publications that were pertinent to the study.

On the other hand, the research design employed in this study was purely descriptive and the findings were on content analysis. While the purposive and survey technique was used to see the effectiveness of the data analyzed since the research involves the overall activities of oil exploration and exploitation which requires the gathering of information from a survey processes in order to ascertain it analysis and conclusion.

Findings and Conclusion

Major findings showed that oil exploration by the oil sectors have problem of implementation on its sustainable development policies, it was also revealed that the existing statutory laws and regulations for environmental protection appears to be grossly inadequate and some of the multinational oil companies like Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria limited, Agip, Chevron and Texaco,Con Oil, etc. operating in Bayelsa State area of Nigeria had failed usefully to adopt sustainable practices and to prevent pollution from the area.

In support of the view, former Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General of Bayelsa State, Kemesoude - Wodu posited the people of Bayelsa State that are greatly suffering of environmental damages and despite the operation of the oil companies like shell, Agip, Con oil, chevron, etc that they do not have functional offices in Bayelsa State and all their administrative and managerial roles are done outside the state. Based on these, it is concluded that oil exploration in Bayelsa State of Nigeria had clearly and seriously damaged the environment and the livelihood of those living in the area. And these have seriously causes high level of poverty because the area had been seriously damaged by the multinationals.

Recommendations

Based on the research carried out, the following recommendations were made in other to solve the problem of sustainable development in Bayelsa State of Nigeria.

1) The study recommended that sustainable development strategic framework should be revisited and implemented in the whole area.
2) Nigeria local content development and monitoring board should try to provide the policy goals in adhering to the rules of the oil exploration and development strategies in the area.
3) Government should provide alternative conflict resolution mechanism in settling dispute as a means of providing efficient environmental protection and control policy in Bayelsa State of Nigeria.
4) Bayelsa State government, federal government and the multinational companies should come to terms in setting up befitting offices in Bayelsa State which will help to a greater extent in solving some of the developmental challenges within the area.
5) Government should hold oil companies operating in the area responsible to compensate host communities for the destruction of their land.
6) Government should provide awareness campaign mechanism with regards to environmental pollution control strategy.
7) There should be proper environmental impact assessment in the area.
8) Government should urgently amend the national oil spill detection and response Act which will help to spell out the penalties on oil spill and remediation's step.
9) Government should urgently direct the Directorate of Petroleum Resources and

Environmental Assessment (Investigation) Agency, Health organization to improve on the conditions of the people health hazard.

10) Government should urgently pass the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) and reintroduced the 10 percent proposed for the clean-up and development of the oil producing areas, also, government should establish a toxicology institute in Bayelsa State to appreciate the magnitude of the problem facing the people.

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